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STUDIES IN ABORIGINAL DECORATIVE ART.

BY W. H. HOLMES.

II.

The rocking stamp or roulette in pottery decoration.

The use of the stamp or figured paddle in pottery decoration, reviewed at some length in the January number of *THE ANTHROPOLOGIST*, was not confined exclusively to the South Appalachian region. A somewhat poorly defined group of ware, not differing greatly in any respect from the Appalachian pottery, and decorated like that ware with stamps, is found in a few limited districts in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, the best and most numerous examples coming from the vicinity of Naples, Scott county, Illinois.

The stamps or dies were not applied to the entire surface of the vessel, as were the paddle stamps of the south, the impressions being independent of each other and separated by short intervals, producing a diaper effect within certain spaces or encircling the vase in zones.

Five illustrations of these simple stamps, or of their faces, as restored from impressions on potsherds, are given in fig. 1, Pl. I. There is little variety save in size or outline. The effect produced by their use is seen in figs. 2 and 3, Pl. I, which illustrate two sherds from the collection of J. G. Henderson, now in the National Museum. The neck of the vase represented by the first of these sherds was encircled by a zone of impressions made with stamp *b*, fig. 1, set in seven horizontal rows, with alternating intervals. Below this, upon the body of the vase, a number of broad incised or trailed lines have been drawn, apparently forming a rude pattern which is elaborated by filling some of the interspaces with impressions from the stamp shown in *d*, fig. 1. In some cases the combination of stamped imprints and incised patterns is made to produce very pleasing effects. The specimen shown in fig. 3 is decorated with three bands of deep, vertically placed impressions made by the long narrow stamp illustrated in *c*, fig. 1. The outer edge of the rim in both

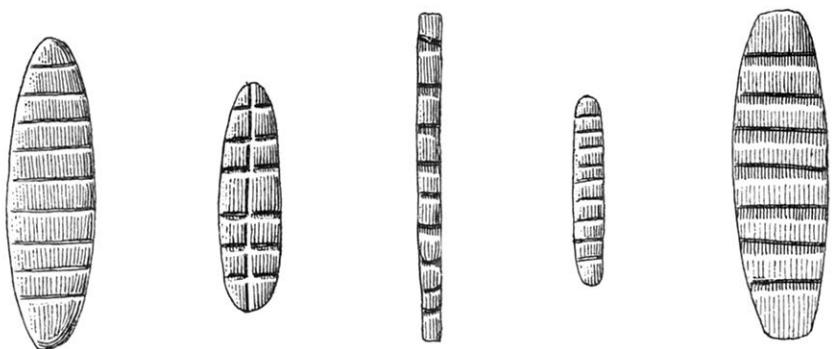


FIG. 1.—Faces of stamps, full size.



FIGS. 2 and 3.—Fragments showing stamp impressions, about $\frac{1}{2}$ actual size.

PLATE I.—Stamped earthenware from Illinois.

specimens is indented with a stamp, and the second has a frieze of nodes made by a punch applied to the inner side.

These stamped specimens are referred to in this place, rather than in connection with the Appalachian stamped ware in the preceding paper, on account of their close relations with another group of pottery ornamented with a roulette or rocking stamp, illustrations of which are given in the Fourth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology. This interesting relationship, heretofore unobserved, may readily be made apparent.

The simple stamps or dies described above appear to have been merely bits of wood terminating in straight, more or less narrow, ends or edges, upon which shallow notches or grooves were cut. In imprinting these upon a flat or flattish surface they were set upon the clay and impressed into it with a simple direct movement; but when the surface was curved somewhat sharply it became necessary, in order to secure a perfect result, to move or rock the stamp slightly back and forth.

Now, it cannot be shown conclusively, perhaps, that this use of the simple straight-edged stamp led to the discovery of the advantages of a stamp with curved edge or face, for the development may possibly have been in the opposite direction, but it appears that such curved stamps were made and used by the potters of this region. The advantage of the curved edge is apparent at a glance, for by rocking the stamp properly narrow and wide spaces may be covered with equal ease, and by giving a forward movement to the implement as it rocks, the space to be ornamented, no matter what its shape or size, may be covered with indentations without removing the tool from the surface of the clay. Mounting upon a handle is essential to the free and proper use of this tool. The step from the use of the curved edge to the employment of a wheel is a slight one, although the advantage gained is very great. Mounted upon a handle the notched wheel, besides serving the purposes just described, may be revolved at will, encircling the vessel or giving lines or filling spaces of any length.

The development of this device began, very probably, with simple modeling tools, such as sticks with sharp, round, or squared ends. The use of these would lead to the decorative treatment of indentations and finally to the employment of tools with multiple points. The wheel and the more elaborately figured stamps are highly differentiated forms of the same device. The most convenient and effect-



FIG. 2.—Fragment of vase from Wisconsin, about $\frac{1}{3}$ actual size.



FIG. 3.—Vase from Wisconsin, $\frac{1}{2}$ actual size.

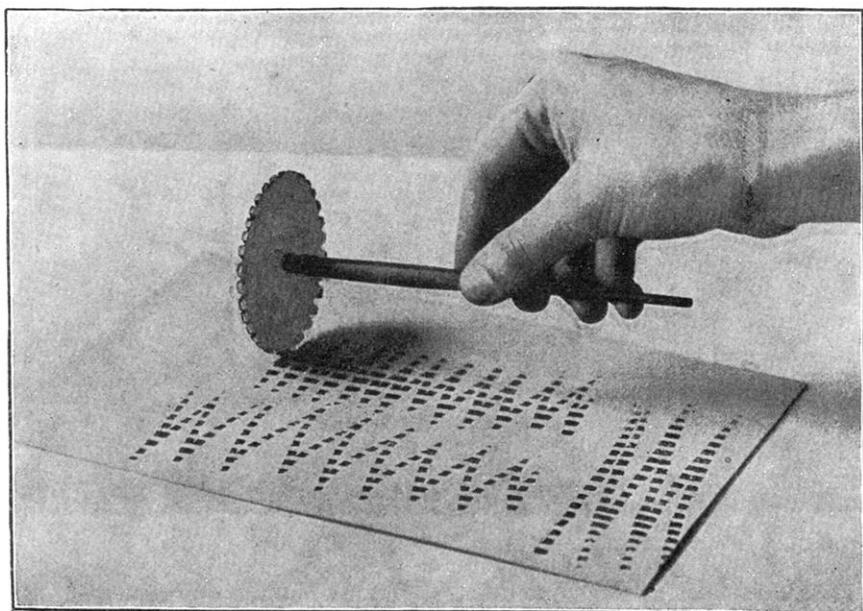


FIG. 1.

PLATE II.—Use of the roulette in pottery decoration.

ive manner of mounting and using the notched wheel is suggested in fig. 1, Pl. II. A card-board disk, notched upon the margin and set upon the end of a penholder, is dipped in ink and applied to a sheet of paper in lieu of a soft clay surface. A forward movement is given as the tool is rocked, and the result is a dotted zigzag which may be varied to give a great variety of effects. Some of these effects closely resemble the imprints of coarse fabrics, and it is not always easy to distinguish them from the indentations of reticulated stamps.

In fig. 2, Pl. II, a fragment of pottery from a mound near Baraboo, Wisconsin, is presented. The markings upon this specimen serve to illustrate several varieties of decorative treatment. Encircling the rim a little below the margin is a line of indentations made by impressing the end of a round stick or stamp. Above and below this are neatly executed roulette effects. The margin was finished by rocking the tool back and forth at an angle of about 45° with the rim of the vase. Below the line of circular indentations are four encircling bands of ornament consisting each of three lines of roulette indentations carried with apparently slight interruptions or resettings of the wheel all around the vessel.

The lower part of the sherd is covered with cord markings, a style of decoration or surface finish almost universal throughout the northern half of the United States east of the Rocky mountains. It is interesting to observe that in this case the cord markings have apparently a zigzag arrangement as if applied by wrapping the cords about a round stick and rolling it back and forth after the manner of the roulette. This subject will be treated at length in a subsequent paper.

The wares characterized by roulette decoration are distributed over a wide area in the upper Mississippi country. They are by no means the only fictile product of this great region, nor is their decoration exclusively of this style. They have little in common with the pottery of the middle and lower Mississippi valley, differing from it in shapes, material, surface finish, and décoration. As indicated in the specimen shown in fig. 2, Pl. II, cord or fabric decoration is associated with roulette decoration and the same is true of all kinds of archaic incised work.

Numerous specimens of roulette-marked vessels could be presented, but one example will suffice to illustrate this peculiar style of embellishment. The vase shown in fig. 3, Pl. II, is one of a pair of

handsome pieces obtained by the Bureau of Ethnology from a mound in Vernon county, Wisconsin. It is $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches in height, and in symmetry and finish rivals the best work of the south. The paste is dark, compact, and fine-grained, and tempered apparently with sand. The color of the surface is a rich mottled brown. The lip is smooth and the margin rounded. The exterior surface of the narrow collar is ornamented with oblique incised lines and crossed at intervals with lines made by a minutely notched wheel. The neck is slightly constricted and is encircled by a polished zone one and one-fourth inches wide, having a line of indentations along the upper edge. The body is separated into four lobes by four vertical, depressed, polished bands one inch wide. Two of these lobes are crossed obliquely by similar polished bands. These bands were all finished with a polishing implement and are slightly depressed, thus giving rise to the somewhat lobed shape. They are bordered by wide incised lines.. The intervening spaces or lobes are indented with a roulette moved back and forth in irregular zigzag arrangement.

It is not to be expected that examples of these notched decorating tools will ever be recovered. Their burial with the dead would at best be of rare occurrence ; besides, they were probably of wood and thus subject to rapid decay unless buried with copper or imbedded in some form of preservative salts. The exact form of the tool as a whole cannot be fully determined, but there need be no question as to its general character and the methods of its use. Its relationship with modeling tools and stamps on the one hand and with cord and fabric markings on the other are of exceptional interest to the students of the evolution of decoration.

MODESTY AND CLOTHING IN AFRICA.—David Kerr Cross, comparing the natives of the region between lakes Nyassa and Tanganyika, who go almost entirely naked, with the well-clothed Arabs and their followers, has no hesitation in saying which are the most modest, and in affirming “that, as a general rule, in Africa modesty is in reverse proportion to clothing.” (*Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, Feb., 1891.*) Mr. Joseph Thomson, in his book, “Through Masai Land,” makes a similar comparison between the well-clad Masai and the naked Wakavirondo, very much in favor of the latter.

JOHN MURDOCH.